Excellency of the Bible

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THE EXCELLENCY OF THE BIBLE.

BEING

Seven Lectures

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

When publishing is so very general, and books on almost all sorts of subjects are so plentiful, it may be deemed unwise in an humble and obscure individual to attempt to swell the number. But it is evident that there must be a general craving for mental aliment, or else authors would soon cease to publish, and the list of Christian authors, we humbly think, is not even yet too numerous. The aim to awaken and foster in the public mind a love for the Holy Scriptures, will be deemed by all Christians lawful and good; and this unpretending effort in that direction we would now commend to the patience and candour of the reader, and above all to the blessing of Almighty God, without which nothing can prosper.

R. MORRIS.

Hunmanby, Yorkshire,
September 3rd, 1858.

The Excellency of the Bible.

CHAPTER I.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE BIBLE ATTESTED BY ITS DIVINITY.

——— "The Bible, hast thou ever heard
Of such a book? The Author God himself;
The subject God and man, salvation, life,
And death— eternal life—eternal death—
Dread words, whose meaning has no end, no bounds—
Most wondrous book! bright candle of the Lord!
Star of eternity! the only star
By which the bark of man could navigate
The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss
Securely! Only star which rose on time,
And on its dark and troubled billows, still,
As generation drifting swiftly by
Succeeded generation, threw a ray
Of heaven's own light; and to the hills of God—
The eternal hills—pointed the sinner's eye."

THE Bible is an incomparable book. Let it be viewed in whatever light it may there is none like it. It is not a book of science or of ethics, and yet its statements are in perfect harmony with the discoveries of modern science, and it inculcates the purest morality.

It contains history the most ancient and authentic—doctrines the most profound and sacred—promises the most cheering, and threatenings the most alarming. All this is taught in language the most simple and lucid, blended at times with imagery the most sublime and fascinating, and to be insensible to its beauties you must wilfully shut your eyes against the light. It is unquestionably the greatest boon which the Author of all good has conferred on our dark and benighted world; and the loss of it would be the heaviest calamity which could possibly befall us. Were the sun blotted out from the heavens, and creation clad in the sable habiliments of night, even that would not be such a catastrophe as our being deprived of the Word of life. Many attempts have indeed at different times been made by wicked and designing men, influenced by Satan, to destroy this precious book; but all such attempts have signally failed, yea and all such attempts *must* fail till the book has accomplished its mission to the world: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

In considering the excellency of the Bible we would point you, in the first place, to its Divinity—that it is not of man but from God—not of human but of Divine origin. It is evident that *wicked* men would not—even granting for argument's sake that they were competent to the task—they *would* not write such a book as the Bible: for that would be analogous to signing their own death warrant, which men are not found to do. The Bible is a book which denounces sin and exalts holiness in the plainest and strongest language possible: its teachings are these, "The wicked

shall be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God." "Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." If wicked men had written it, instead of this it would have pandered to the depraved passions of human nature, and in every way conceivable palliated and excused human folly and transgression, and the abominable deeds of darkness, such as theft, adultery, revenge, and murder would have been celebrated as virtues worthy of our admiration and imitation. But the writers of it were good men who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The fount in which their spirits bathed was holy and divine, and the light which illumined their eyes was light from heaven, and the truths they enunciated to the world they received from the Heavenly Oracle, to lead men from the paths of sin and death into those of holiness and life. With strict impartiality they record, not merely the virtues, but also failings of good men, such as Noah, Abraham, David, and Peter. But let it be remembered that their imperfections are never held up for our imitation, but we are expressly told that they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come—the very purity of the Bible bespeaks it to be from heaven. For a book which is so subversive of the kingdom of darkness as it is found to be, in restraining from sin and leading to holiness, must have descended from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

And to see the Divinity of the Bible let us look also at its unity. There is a remarkable unity in it as to its leading *facts*. The creation of the world—the creation of man, and his happy state in innocence; the temptation and the fall; the descent of

the human family from one pair; the corruption of the race, and the flood by which the whole race was swept away, with the exception of Noah and his family; the call and the family of Abraham; the descent into Egypt and the cruel bondage there, and the deliverance thence by the hands of Moses and Aaron; the journey in the wilderness and the possession of the promised land; Israel in the times of the Judges and of the kings; the temple service at Jerusalem; the revolt of the ten tribes; the captivity of Babylon and the release thence; the nation and the family from which the Messiah was to spring; the birth, the blameless and holy life, the discourses and miracles, the cruel sufferings, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; the formation of a Christian church, and the wonderful success which crowned the labours of the Apostles. These are some of the leading and most prominent facts of the Bible, and which are presented to us in history, in prophecy, in song, in narratives, and in Epistles; but notwithstanding this diversity of style, and the wonderfully different circumstances of several of the narrators, and the great distance of time and place which marked the record of them from time to time, yet singular to tell there is a substantial unity in the whole. It is not pretended that there are no minor discrepancies as to dates and figures: but even these will be found greatly to diminish upon a close and candid examination, and neither their number nor character are such as in any way to justify the rejection of the facts themselves.

And there is, too, a unity of doctrine in it. There is the doctrine of Divine Providence: see how it is taught us in the earlier records of Revelation, in the lives of the Patriarchs, who were taught of

God when to move and where to pitch their tents; and also distinctly asserted in the discourses of our Lord:—there is the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer, of which the scriptures of the Old and of the New Testaments present us with numerous illustrations:—there is the doctrine of the Divine Unity which was first asserted by Moses, but also confirmed by our Saviour, when he said, "I and my Father are one." There is the doctrine of atonement by vicarious or substitutionary sufferings: hence the burnt offerings and sacrifices under the law which typified another and a more perfect sacrifice, even the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world: and there is the doctrine of Divine influence in Regeneration. You will hear David pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me,"—and you will find God, through Ezekiel, promising "A new heart also will I give you: and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh;" and you will find the apostle James saying—"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." Thus we find in the Bible a perfect harmony on these and kindred truths.

And there is in it too a unity of moral purpose. The aim of the Bible is eminently moral and practical, to redeem and to sanctify the human race. This is the tendency alike of its history, prophecy, poetry, doctrines, precepts, promises, and threatenings!

Whether you read the history of Moses—the poetry of David—the eminently evangelical prophecy of Isaiah:—or the narratives of the four Evangelists, with their tender but touching descriptions of the tragic scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, and the Epistles by Paul, Peter, and James; the moral lesson is one and the same

in them all. Their aim may be summed up in the words of the beloved disciple, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

And there is a unity likewise between the Old and New Testaments. It is the same Divine and Holy Being which speaks in both—according to the language of the apostle Paul, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." The Bible is not a series of distinct revelations, but one and indivisible. We meet indeed with a fulness and a clearness in the Gospel that we look for in vain in the law: but let us remember that the latter had prepared the way for the former, that it was but typical of it, and that the great lesson of salvation by faith may be learned from the law as well as from the Gospel. While, then, we are grateful for the superior light of the Christian revelation, yet we would not be deprived of the writings of Moses, the Psalms of David, and the predictions of the prophets: but rather we would read the one in the light of the other—regarding them as explanatory and confirmatory of one another.

There is then a wondrous unity in the Bible: written by a number of authors differing greatly in mental powers and culture, and portions of it written in divers languages and dialects, and also at great distances of time and place: but in spite of all these disadvantages, it presents a harmonious whole —a unity which is wholy inexplicable except on the supposition that the writers of it were influenced and guided by the same divine and unerring Spirit.

And the Divinity of the Bible is also proved by miracles. The waters of the Nile were turned into blood, a miraculous darkness came over all the land of Egypt, except that part of it inhabited by the Israelites, and in one night all the first-born of the Egyptians were slain. The Red Sea was divided before the Children of Israel, so that they passed through it as on dry land, which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned. Manna descended in the wilderness, and man did eat angels' food: the rock was smitten at Horeb, and water gushed out of it; the fiery cloudy pillar attended the people through all their sojourn for forty years in the wilderness; "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of a fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of a cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." The Saviour fed five thousand with five barley loaves, and two fishes: he walked upon the Sea of Gallilee, and stilled the tempest with a word; he healed the Centurion's servant with only speaking the word; touched the bier, and brought Jairus's daughter to life, and raised Lazarus from the grave after he had lain there four days: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." And these miracles, unlike the lying wonders of the church of Rome, and the pretended miracles of false teachers, were not done in a corner, but openly and publicly, and have been handed down to us by testimony the most incontrovertible. It is evident that the inspired writers could not be impostors, whose aim it was to practice upon the credulity of the world: for the Word of the

Lord was a *burden*, in the delivery of which both prophets and apostles encountered the prejudices and passions of men, renounced every prospect of advancement, and exposed themselves to obloquy and hatred, to persecution and to death. If they were impostors, it is strange that their calamities and sufferings did not lead them to renounce that which was the cause of them all: for men do not attempt to deceive but for some sinister purpose, or with a view to personal benefit. But is is quite the reverse of this here: for Moses, instead of the crown and the throne of Egypt, had to endure affliction with the people of God, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Jesus Christ was stoned, buffeted, spat upon, scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified on the accursed tree. All the apostles endured the most cruel sufferings, and nearly all of them died a martyr's death in support of their claim to inspiration. Paul, who in youth was educated at the feet of Gamaliel, and belonged to the straightest sect of the Pharisees, had opened before him the most flattering and brilliant worldly career, but he renounced it for the sake of preaching that faith which he once aimed to destroy, and he gives us a summary of his sufferings: "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen; in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily—the care of all the churches." The *gain* of the writers of the Bible, then, was not wealth, or honour, or renown; but poverty, disgrace,

imprisonment, and death. Surely such characters could not be impostors? And again, neither were they *deceived*, for they were eye-witnesses of the things which they testified unto others: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us."

And it is worthy of remark that, in rejecting the miracles of the Gospel, a far greater miracle than they all must be received; for how, without miracles, will you account for the early spread of Christianity? In the course of thirty or forty years it was disseminated, not only throughout all parts of the Roman Empire, but as far as the Parthians and Indians. At this time Pliny wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan, in which he laments the progress the Gospel had made; he affirms that, "The temples were almost deserted, that the sacred victims scarcely found any purchasers, and the superstition (for such he called the Gospel) had not only infected the cities, but had even spread itself into the villages and open countries of Pontus and Bithynia." And not only at its earliest commencement, but for nearly three hundred years, by the industry and zeal of the first Christians, the Gospel was so widely promulgated, that long before Constantine professed Christianity, it was received in the greatest part of the Roman Empire. "We are but of yesterday," says Tertullian, "and have filled all places belonging to you, your cities, islands, castles, towns, councils, your camps, wards, companies, the palace, senate, and the forum; we have left you nothing but your temples." Thus, without arms, without wealth, and without learning and eloquence, it triumphed everywhere, and it uprooted faiths that were backed by the sword, wealth, and philosophy, and rendered venerable by antiquity. The only reasonable

solution of its success is that "The Lord was working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." But to admit that this was the work of impostors and fanatics is to admit a greater miracle than any which the Bible contains.

And in support of the Divinity of the Bible, let us just glance at the evidence of prophecy, which is in truth a miracle of knowledge, just as raising the dead is a miracle of power. Look at the prophecies respecting the Messiah. The ancient prophets spoke with clearness of his human and Divine nature; of his descent from Isaac, from Jacob, from Judah, and from David. They foretold with accuracy the very time of his coming; the place and the circumstances of his birth, his sufferings, death, burial, resurrection and ascension to heaven; and their predictions were delivered some hundreds of years before his appearance in the flesh. Surely this was above human foresight and skill; in uttering such predictions they must have been moved by the Holy Ghost. Look also at the prophecies respecting the fall of Babylon. In Isa. xlv. 1, we read, "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut." Here we have an unborn conqueror called by name, intimating that it was his surname, and not given him at his birth; and also the manner of his entering the city of Babylon is exactly foretold, for after Cyrus had turned the Euphrates from its channel, he entered the city by the bed of the river; and found the two leaved gates, by which all the entrances from the river were defended, left open, forgotten, doubtless, in the general intoxication of a royal feast. And this prophecy was

delivered one hundred and sixty years before its fulfilment, which is an evident proof that it is given by inspiration of God; other prophecies might also be adduced, as those respecting Nineveh and Jerusalem, and the world-wide dispersion of the Jews, which are all lasting monuments of the Divinity of the Bible.

The conclusion to which we are led, then, is this, that the Bible is from God, and that it is invested with an authority all its own. See to it, then, that you do not make light of it, for if you do slight his word, you are thereby dishonouring God. There is in it a message from God to you; so that whenever this blessed book is opened before you, or whenever its accents are read in your hearing, it behoves you to say, as Samuel was instructed to respond when he heard the voice of God amid the solitude of the Temple and stillness of the midnight hour, "Lord speak, for thy servant heareth." Now it is a promise, anon it is a threatening; here it is a doctrine, and there it is a precept; but whatever form it assumes, still it is the voice of God. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

"May this blest volume ever lie,
Close to my heart, and near my eye;
Till life's last hours my thoughts engage,
And be my chosen heritage."

CHAPTER II.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE BIBLE IS SEEN, IN THAT IT CONTAINS GOOD TIDINGS FOR MAN, OR THAT IT REVEALS A WAY OF SALVATION.

"Father of mercies, in thy word,
What endless glory shines;
For ever be thy name adored,
For these celestial lines.

"Here may the wretched sons of want,
Exhaustless riches find;
Riches above what earth can grant,
And lasting as the mind.

"Here the Redeemer's welcome voice
Spreads heavenly peace around;
And life and everlasting joys
Attend the blissful sound.

"O may these heavenly pages be
My ever dear delight;
And still new beauties may I see,
And still increasing light.

"Divine Instructor, gracious Lord,
Be thou for ever near;
Teach me to love thy sacred word,
And view my Saviour there."—STEELE.

In our preceding remarks, we have laid before the reader a few out of the many evidences of the divinity of the Bible. We have

dwelt upon the purity, unity, miracles, and prophecy of the Scriptures, and our aim has been to stir up your mind by way of remembrance, so that you may be ready always to give an answer to him that asketh you of the hope that is in you. This being done, we now hasten to lay before you those good tidings of salvation which it brings us.

And let us remind you, at the outset, that these good tidings are just what humanity, in its present state, most needs; for it is evident from Scripture, and confirmed by reason and experience, that man is not now what he was originally. When he came out of the hands of the Creator, he was holy and happy, and he was *happy* because he was holy. The heart was not, then, the seat of disobedience and corruption, and the bosom was not agitated with those restless desires, which have ever since disturbed and lacerated it; but the ruling passion of the soul was to serve and please its Maker, and in the knowledge and service of him, it found its happiness. To suppose otherwise, to suppose that there was any defect in his moral and physical constitution, would be to reflect on the wisdom and benevolence of the Creator; for it is reasonable for us to think that, in making man, the noblest work of God, he would make him perfect, and give him the possession of everything necessary to his happiness. This tallies with the scriptural account of the creation of man, for he was not made till the material creation had been brought into a fit state for his reception; he had the garden of Eden given him for his residence, while his time would be employed in dressing it; thus proving that labour is not a curse but a blessing to man; of every tree in the garden he had a right to

eat, except of the tree knowledge of good and evil, and there would be thus no lack of food. The animals were brought to him to receive their names from him, and by this he had dominion given him over the works of the Creator; and to complete his happiness, God gave him a helpmate;—made her, not out of the dust to be trampled upon, nor out of his head to rule over him, but out of his side, to be cherished even as he doth his own flesh. Thus, made perfect and placed in a newly-formed world, with the animals under his sway, and the best and fairest part of creation for his abode, what more could man want to render him happy?

But alas! man swerved from his allegiance to his Creator, and with his innocence he likewise lost his happiness; for no sooner had he sinned than there came a consciousness of guilt, and an apprehension of danger, and he goes and hides himself among the trees of the garden, from the presence of his Maker; it was the first time he experienced fear, and it was experienced then only as the consequence of transgression. But the sinner is summoned from his hiding place to give an account of his conduct; but then, as ever since, the culprit was full of excuses, man blames the woman, and the woman blames the serpent. But he receives his sentence from the lips of God, he is turned out of Paradise, which was endeared to him by so many ties; the ground is cursed for his sake, and the cherubims, with a flaming sword in their hands, are placed to guard the entrance into the garden from which he had just been expelled.

And let us not think that we have nothing to do with the original transgression; for Adam was the federal head of the

race ; had he remained obedient, we should have reaped the benefit of it, just as we are now made to reap the consequences of his disobedience. "Behold I was born in sin, and shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me." But, remember, we are not only corrupt by nature, but alas, by practice too ! Wherever man is found he is a sinner ; it matters not whether he be civilized or uncivilized, whether he dwells in the temperate, torrid, or frigid zones, or what may be the colour or complexion of his skin, or the language or dialect in which he communicates his ideas, wherever you meet him you will find that he is a guilty transgressor, doomed to endless woe. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Death is the penalty annexed to transgression ; "The soul that sinneth it shall die ;" again, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them ;" and thus we are all under the curse, for there is no one that has continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them." It is evident that one or other of the following alternatives must take place : First, God must either change his purpose, and annul the threatening ; or, secondly, the transgressor must suffer the penalty ; or, thirdly, a substitute must be found who will suffer in his stead. Let us look a little more closely at each of these.

First, then, is it at all probable that the moral Governor of the world will relax the rigour of his law, and annul the penalty annexed to human transgression ? No ! such an idea is not for a moment to be entertained ; for it is inconsistent with his veracity and holiness. "God is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent ;" and

that very act would also undermine and destroy the framework of his moral government over the universe. At whatever cost, then, it is effected, the honour of his law must be held inviolable; it must be done, even though the planets were driven from their spheres, and the sun, moon, and stars were to set to rise no more for ever. Yea, it must be done, though the earth, with its mighty load of continents, and islands, rivers, seas, and oceans, were commingled in one general conflagration, and the whole race of man swept away as with the besom of destruction; and "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

The second alternative proposed is, that man must suffer the penalty incurred by transgression. It is evident that this is what he had merited, and there would have been no injustice had God allowed the original sentence pronounced upon him to take its course unmolested; for man, having sinned, God was under no obligation to devise a way of salvation for him; he was entirely at the mercy of his justly offended Sovereign and Judge; to him it pertained to determine whether he should have means of salvation at all, and *what* those should be. "But thou art a God ready to pardon," says good Nehemiah, and let us rejoice that, in the exercise of that mercy in which he delights, he has devised a way of salvation for us.

Here, then, comes in our third alternative, a substitute is found, who in his own person will endure the penalty due to human transgression. This evidently is permissible; for if the demands of justice are fully met, at the same time that love and mercy are extended to the sinner, the basis of the Divine moral government will be as firm and immovable as

before, the machinations of hell will be frustrated, man will be saved and God glorified. And he who undertook to become our substitute is God's only begotten and well-beloved Son: "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I, send me." "Then said I, Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart." And by virtue of the mysterious but glorious constitution of his person, as God and man, he is eminently qualified for the task: for being divine he is high enough to lay his hand on God as the offended party; and at the same time being man he is humble and lowly enough to lay his hand on man as the offender, as the party who had insulted and offended the Majesty of heaven. It was indeed necessary that he should become man, in order to be qualified to suffer and die for us, and also to sympathize with us in our sorrows and trials; and it was also necessary for him to be God, in order to give efficacy and value to his sufferings, for the sufferings of a mere creature, however exalted, could never atone for sin; and the superior efficacy of the Redeemer's sacrifice over the sacrifices under the law, arose, not from the Divine appointment, for the sacrifices of the law were divinely appointed, but from the dignity of the Saviour's person. "Who being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "And without

controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on the world, received up into glory." And think what great and untold sufferings he had to endure in order to atone for our transgressions! Were we to confine our thoughts to his bodily sufferings, painful and ignominious though they were, we should have but a very faint and inadequate idea of them: but we must look at the far greater and heavier sorrows of his soul,—for the sufferings of his soul, as an old Divine remarks, were the soul of his sufferings. He bore the former with comparative ease, and with exemplary courage and fortitude; but his spirit sank under the latter; he began to be sorrowful and very heavy, and said he to his disciples, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me, and he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt." And it was this, too, which wrung from him the agonizing and heart-rending cry on Calvary, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" that is to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." And don't begin to cavil and say that the atonement, or rather this view of it, represents God as being cruel and vindictive. By no means! for he exacts no more than the honour and stability of his throne demand; and you must remember, too, that he is *just* as well as merciful, and a God all mercy were a God unjust; and moreover the atonement originated in the love of God, and is the greatest and fullest exhibition of it which the world ever witnessed, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that who-

soever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

Salvation through Christ and him crucified is the sum and substance, the soul and marrow of Inspired Truth. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And it is in vain, all in vain you look to any other quarter but to the Bible to learn the way of salvation. It is in vain you look to Nature, for Nature with all her wonders and glories could never answer the question,—How can a man be just with God? It never could tell you of redeeming love and point to a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. And it is in vain, too, you would inquire of the sages of antiquity about the way of salvation: their minds on this subject, which of all others is by far the most important and interesting, were as dark as midnight.

"Laden with guilt, and full of fears,
I fly to thee, my Lord;
And not a glimpse of hope appears
But in thy written word.

The volume of my Father's grace
Does all my griefs assuage;
Here I behold my Saviour's face
Almost in every page."

And remember, too, that the way of salvation is taught with

such clearness in the Bible that it is impossible even for the most ignorant and unlearned to mistake it. Yes, on the subject of a sinner's salvation the Bible is a plain book, and speaks a plain language, a language intelligible to all : be they rulers or subjects, masters or servants, rich or poor, learned or unlearned : the sum of all its teaching on this head is—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. And reader, have *you* believed on Him? He is just such a Saviour as you need: compassionate and meek, he pities you and says ;—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest : take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Tell us not of your unworthiness, for He is able to save them unto the uttermost that come unto God by him : it is not merit that he requires, but unworthiness ; not purity, but pollution ; and here a principle of barter is elicited and adopted unknown to the commerce of the world, for here men buy wine and milk—precious things which the wealth of the universe has not value enough to purchase—without money and without price. "The Spirit and the bride say Come, and let him that heareth say Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." If you still keep at a guilty distance from him how fearful is your state ! You despise the infinite and boundless love of God, trample on the sacrifice of the cross, and grieve and insult the Holy Spirit : and happy for you if, despised and insulted, the Spirit is not saying concerning you—he is joined to his idols, let him alone ; he has loved the world ; he has loved pleasure ; he has loved sin ; let him pursue them ; let him take his course and rush onward to perdition, for remember, Christ is not only a

saviour but the only Saviour, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." If, therefore, you trample on his sacrifice and count the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries, and as for eternity "it will be the blackness of darkness for ever. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

CHAPTER III.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE BIBLE IS SEEN IN THAT IT IS THE INSTRUMENT OF MAN'S CONVERSION.

"This is the word of truth and love
Sent to the nations from above;
Jehovah here resolves to show
What his almighty grace can do.

This remedy did wisdom find
To heal diseases of the mind;
This sovereign balm, whose virtues can
Restore the ruined creature man.

The Gospel bids the dead revive,
Sinners obey the voice and live;
Dry bones are raised and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone are turned to flesh.

May but this grace my soul renew,
Let sinners gaze and hate me too
The word that saves me does engage
A sure defence from all their rage."—WATTS.

In our last we endeavoured to lay before the reader that which is the superlative glory of the Bible, that it contains good tidings of salvation for wretched and fallen man:—our object in this paper is to show that it is the Instrument of Conversion. And how deeply momentous is the change implied in the term conversion. In his defence before Agrippa the Apostle Paul speaks

of it thus; "Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." And what is man's state before Conversion? He is a lover of the world and sin, and the enemy of God,—for the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. And what a fearfully wretched state this for a responsible being to be in! So long as you are in it, you are devoid of true peace, for "there is no peace saith my God to the wicked." To obtain peace you must banish reflection and drown the voice of conscience in the hurry and bustle of business or in sensuality and vice; and slight alike the invitations of the Gospel and the warnings and admonitions of Providence. Ah! were your eyes but enlightened by Divine grace, you could not rest a single moment longer till you were delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan, and brought into the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. For it behoves you seriously to ponder the truth that in your present unconverted state you are wholly unfit for the society and blessedness of heaven; and were you even to be admitted into heaven it would be no heaven to you; you would be a very wretch, the most miserable of beings on the plains of bliss. What pleasure could you find in the presence of God? In the presence of Him "who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity?" "For, Our God is a consuming fire." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And what pleasure and sweetness could you find in the worship and praise of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect? For you have no relish for the worship of God, but it is a heavy

burden unto you. "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him." To enjoy heaven you must be made meet for it, for as Montgomery says,—

> "Heaven is a place of rest from sin,
> But all who hope to enter there
> Must here that holy course begin,
> Which shall their souls for rest prepare."

"And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." How fearful, then, is your condition? for the slender thread of human existence may almost at any moment be snapt asunder; the voice may speedily say unto you as it did to one of old,—"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" And being unfit for heaven, you will be turned into hell to dwell in eternal torments with the devil and his angels. And your misery will be greatly aggravated by the consideration that you are invited in the Gospel to turn from your wicked ways and live, but that you slight the warning given you. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early but they shall not find me."

With regard to the nature of the change indicated by the term

Conversion it is most important for you to bear in mind that the Holy Spirit in it imparts no new natural powers to man. It is not because the sinner has not the ability, but because he has not the will or the disposition, that he does not come to Christ. "And ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Had man not had the power to come then he would not be responsible, for where there is no power there can be no obligation to obey or any guilt in disobedience; but if the power or the ability be present but the *will* wanting, there is then a fearful responsibility resting on the transgressor, and his destruction will emphatically be his own act. But the very commands and invitations addressed to man in the Scriptures imply that he has the power to come. Thus Isaiah says, "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Wherein would have been the propriety of calling on man to incline his ear and hear had he not the ability to do so? The language would have been no better than sheer mockery. And again the prophet says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." The very commands to seek the Lord and to forsake his way, evidently imply that man has the power to comply with them, or else they might with as much propriety and pertinence be applied to the inanimate and brute creation as to man. And again our Saviour says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and it is clear that if men have not the

power to come they are not blameable for not coming, but are rather the objects of pity. But man is a reasonable creature, and God deals with him as such : "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" and we find that man exercises his reason on all other subjects—on trade and politics, and arts and sciences, then why not on religion? Be assured, his repugnance to religion arises not from any defect in the natural constitution of the mind, but from a deep-rooted and inveterate malady in the moral system. It is this which leads men to call good evil and evil good, sweet bitter and the bitter sweet, and to put light for darkness and darkness for light. *Cannot believe!* so said the Pharisees; but what said our Saviour unto them? How can ye believe—how is it possible that ye should believe—who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Where is the man convinced of sin, the man of humble and contrite heart, who feels as he ought to feel? that is the man ready to embrace the truth.—"If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God;" so said the Saviour, and let his judgment in the matter be conclusive.

But if no new powers are imparted, what then, it will be asked, is the office of the Holy Spirit in conversion? We reply that a new bias is given to those powers which man already possesses; the heart is changed, the understanding is enlightened, the obduracy of the will is overcome, the affections purified, and the life is made pure also. And this is a change which none but the Divine Spirit could accomplish. A strong and powerful

impression may be produced ; the feelings may be wrought upon, and an outward reformation effected ; the imagination may be pleased, and the taste gratified, and the intellect instructed and regaled by the force of logic and the winning and persuasive powers of oratory : but the heart—the seat of corruption and sin—will remain unchanged, and the impression produced will be like the morning cloud and the early dew, which pass away.

"Can ought beneath a power divine
The stubborn will subdue ?
'Tis thine, Eternal Spirit, thine,
To form the heart anew.

'Tis thine the passions to recall,
And upward bid them rise ;
To make the scales of error fall
From reason's darkened eyes.

To chase the shades of death away,
And bid the sinner live ;
A beam of heaven, a vital ray,
'Tis thine alone to give."

"No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Ah, such is the depravity of the human heart, such is its love of sin, that without the influence of the Spirit it never would come to Christ, but would be content to remain at a guilty distance from him. And the success of the Gospel in apostolic times is everywhere ascribed to the Spirit ; if five thousand souls were added to the Church at the feast of Pentecost, we are told that it was the Lord that did it ; and if the heart of Lydia was opened to attend to the things which were spoken of Paul, it is recorded that the Lord did it ; and speaking of the success which attended the labours of those who were

scattered abroad upon the persecution which arose about Stephen, the inspired historian tells us—"And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord; thus their success is clearly traceable to the hand of the Lord being with them; and in writing to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul says, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase: so then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

But though the Spirit be the grand agent in conversion, it is to be remembered that the Word is the instrument usually employed by him; it is the sword of the Spirit, that by means of which he works. And it is worthy of remark that the Spirit reveals no new truths to the mind of man at his conversion, he reveals to him nothing which is not already contained in the sacred oracles; but the truths contained therein, He applies with sovereign and irresistable power to the heart: thus fulfilling the prediction of the Saviour, "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." To contend for the theory of inward light, is to throw open the flood-gate of religious fanaticism and error, and to charge on the Holy Spirit the wild phantasies and aberrations of man's disordered imagination. And also this would represent the teachings of the Spirit as contradictory, which it is impossible for it to be, "for there is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling:" but those who have pretended to be guided by the inward light have propounded not merely erroneous, but also most absurd and contradictory theories. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

And neither is it to be supposed that the Spirit *resides* in the Word : for that would, in some sense or another, make the Word and the Spirit to be *one ;* which they evidently are not : for if they were, then there would be no need to pray for the Spirit, seeing he resided in the Word, and wherever the one went, there the other would be also. But our Saviour has encouraged us to ask for the Spirit, saying, "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?" And the spirit of humble, earnest, and believing prayer must descend on the Christian church ere it can work any great deliverance in the earth. "Finally brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you."

And, regarded as an instrument, the Word possesses every conceivable excellence and perfection for the purpose of conversion : there is nothing that can be added to it or taken from it. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." And no book is so well adapted for conversion as the Bible : for it does not content itself with lopping off the excrescent branches, but it lays the axe at once to the root of the tree ; it does not attempt to purify the streams whilst it leaves the fountain untouched, but in the first place it purifies the fountain and then the streams become pure also : for by changing the heart—the fountain of all corruption—the life becomes reformed too. And under the teachings of this hallowed book, when accompanied by the Spirit, the drunkard becomes sober, the fornicator chaste, the thief honest, the blasphemer learns to pray, the covetous becomes

liberal, and the outwardly moral, but self-righteous character, casts away every ground of dependance for salvation but the work and righteousness of Christ. And after all other means have been tried and found ineffectual, this will be found to succeed: "for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imagination and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." And remembering what it effected in Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Rome, Corinth, Philippi, and Ephesus in primitive times, we despair not for the conversion of the wide world. It is as true now as it was in the days of the Psalmist, that the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty: as the barbarities committed on defenceless women and children and innocent babes in the Indian revolt abundantly testify. To promote education and encourage the arts and sciences, and to extend trade and commerce and frame wise and wholesome laws are indeed praiseworthy: but let us remember that all this will fail to convert the nations if we do not give them the Bible too. It is *this* that teaches us our duty to God and man, and gives us the golden rule, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets;" it is *this* that points to a crucified Redeemer—to him who died to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Let it but be disseminated amongst the nations of the

earth, and believed by them, there will then be a universal and indissoluble bond of union between them; all injustice, tyranny, cruelty, revenge, and wars would cease, and holiness, peace, and happiness would everywhere prevail; and then, and not till then, will the happy consummation so long foretold and so anxiously looked for be realized: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men."

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE BIBLE DEMONSTRATED BY ITS SUFFICIENCY, OR THAT IT CONTAINS ALL THINGS NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

In asserting the sufficiency of the Bible, it is not meant that it contains *all truth*. It does not contain all truth in history : it is indeed invaluable as a historical record ; and it would be a great catastrophe if such an ancient and credible record were to be lost, but yet it is not pretended that all historic truth is to be met with in the Bible ; for there have been preserved and handed down to us the works of Josephus, the Jewish historian, which, on many points illustrate and confirm the sacred narrative ; and we have also histories of ancient Rome and Greece. And again, it does not contain all truth in science : for it was not given to teach it ; and when we look around on the face of nature ; when we look on the heavens above us and the earth beneath us, we behold innumerable truths which are not written in Scripture. And it is natural for us to suppose that great improvements have been made in science since the time the Bible was written ; and it must be borne in mind that it is a popular book, hence it employs the language of the people, and not scientific and philosophic terms. But it is consolatory for us to

that there is nothing in it when fairly examined, that is contradictory to the discoveries of science. Look for instance at the discoveries of modern astronomy as to the extent and magnitude of Creation : the power of the telescope has brought to light innumerable worlds, scattered throughout space, which are peopled with intelligent beings ; thus demonstrating that our earth is far from being the only place which manifests the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator : that it is in truth but a speck,—an atom in the Creation. But as it has been again and again demonstrated, the statements of Revelation are in no way at variance with this : yea, we rejoice in it as it gives us a higher and more exalted idea of the creative power and goodness of Deity. And the same thing is true also with regard to Geology : infidels and sceptics caviled long, and laboured hard to set it and Scripture at variance, but the attempt was futile, and the Bible has not only stood the test, but its statements have gained in clearness and force by the very attempt made to overturn and invalidate them.

Further, it must be evident that all the miracles of our Lord are not recorded in Scripture : "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book ; and there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." And there are good reasons for the omission : for if all had been recorded, that must necessarily have materially increased the bulk of the sacred volume, and its usefulness would by that means have been greatly impeded : hence the Divine wisdom displayed in the selection. And there

is presumptive proof that the things which were omitted were chiefly, if not exclusively, of local interest, and thus were not of that general importance and interest which called for their being handed down to posterity. And besides this, the omission in no way invalidates the clearness and fulness of Scripture as to the way of salvation, which is manifestly the chief point or lesson of Divine Revelation : whatever is omitted which might or might not satisfy the curious and speculative : there is nothing omitted that is necessary for us to know in order to salvation : but the way of a sinner's salvation is written in it as with a sunbeam.

Now to see this let us consider what are the things which are necessary to salvation. It is necessary to salvation that we should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: and the Scriptures are certainly sufficient for this purpose, for John tells us, and that too after marking the omission of many of his miracles : "But these things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name." The Bible then is sufficient, yea, all-sufficient to lead us to believe in the Saviour : though all his discourses and miracles are not recorded, and that for reasons which infinite wisdom saw to be just and conclusive ; yet what is written is sufficient for this purpose ; for the law, the prophets, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles all point to him, and assert the importance, the infinite importance of faith in Him. And it is necessary to salvation that we should be born again, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," But the apostle says : "Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures."

It is necessary to salvation that we should be sanctified: and our Lord prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth;" thus we are born again and sanctified through the Word. And these things prove not only that the Scriptures are valuable, but also that they are sufficient; not only that they contain much that is precious, but also that they contain all things necessary to salvation. For the apostle James could not have said with truth that they were able to save the soul; and Paul could not have said that they were able "to make the man of God perfect, throughly furnished to every good work," unless they contained all things necessary to salvation." And had the Bible not been sufficient, Abraham could not have said to Dives, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." There is here a striking proof of the sufficiency of Revelation, for it is clearly maintained that if the rich man's brethren would not hear Moses and the Prophets—if these were despised and neglected and proved of no avail, then the ministry of one from the dead would also prove ineffectual. Moses and the prophets were sufficient and much more adapted for them than would be the appearance amongst them of one from the dead; from the novelty and grandeur of it, it might at first produce a powerful impression, but if it came to be repeated it would speedily pass away. The adulterer would again return to his debauchery; the drunkard would again return to his cup; the covetous would again return to his gold; and the thief would again return to his plunder; and the hypocrite would again put on a profession of religion as a mask with which to deceive the world with his seeming to be religious; and thus, notwithstanding the momentary check which

had they received, they would again slide into their accustomed channels, only perhaps with this difference, that the apathy and indifference to Divine and holy things would, if possible, be greater than before. If the Scriptures and the ministry of the Gospel fail to impress us, there is but feeble hope of any other instrumentality effecting it; for the wickedness which leads us to despise the one, would lead us to despise the other also, were it adopted, even though it were the ministry of a messenger from the invisible world. Therefore we conclude that whatever else be true, or whatever else be false—whatever else in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, be profitable or unprofitable—whatever else in philosophy, or science, or history, be true or untrue—there is enough in the Holy Scriptures, and in the power of the Holy Ghost, for the conversion, the regeneration, the sanctification, the instruction, and the salvation of all who believe.

Again we remark that salvation is of such supreme importance that it would be a practical impeachment of the love and justice of God to have left in doubt or uncertainty anything relating to the way of salvation. And it would have been left in doubt if He had left it to rely on the uncertainties of oral tradition or the teachings of fallible men. In the patriarchal ages, God himself revealed the way of salvation to the patriarchs, so that they were not left in uncertainty. In the Levitical ages, God himself revealed in the law the way of salvation to the Israelites, and gave them a succession of inspired prophets, so that they were not left in uncertainty. In like manner, in the Christian age, God revealed the way of salvation through his Son and his inspired apostles; and

when they were about to depart, the Holy Ghost inspired them so as to leave with us the record of Divine truth found in the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation; and thus adding the New Testament to the Old, he has revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures the way of salvation. He has shown his love by not leaving a matter of such matchless importance as the salvation of our immortal souls to the uncertainties of oral tradition, but recording it in the sure, certain, infallible Word—the written Word of the living God. He has shown his justice by not leaving such stupendous doctrines as salvation or damnation, heaven or hell, upon the changing, errable decisions of fallible men—whether councils or popes, or cardinals or bishops—all fallible men—but in the unchanging Record, the infallible Witness, the eternal and written Word of God himself.

If He had left the way of salvation, as some seem to imagine, to the testimony of oral tradition, there could be no certainty as to the truth; for we all know that the most simple matters of fact are often mistaken or perverted more or less by every subsequent person who relates them, so that we seldom believe implicitly the testimony of any but an eye-witness of the fact. We have an instance of the uncertainty of tradition mentioned in the 21st chapter of the Gospel by John and the 23rd verse: "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him he shall not die; but if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Here we have the disciples reporting that John would not die; either that he should be transfigured as Enoch and Elias were, so as not to taste death, or else that he would live till the coming of Christ; but this was an error which

arose, as the evangelist tells us, from their misunderstanding the language of the Saviour to Peter, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Thus we see how easily mistakes may be made, and a false impression produced, even where there is not the intention of deceiving; if then we had to learn the way of salvation from tradition, there could have been no certainty whatever respecting it.

Again if God had left the way of salvation, as some seem to imagine, to the writings of the Fathers, there could have been no certainty among men as to the truth, for the Fathers were not inspired, and consequently not infallible; hence it is not safe or wise in all things to follow them; and their works were very voluminous and written in the dead languages, so that the mass of the people could never learn the way of salvation from them. And further, if God had left the way of salvation to the decisions of councils, or the bulls of popes, or the opinions of bishops, there would have been not the least certainty as to the truth: for councils have contradicted councils, and mutually anathematized each other: Popes have contradicted Popes, and in the most formal manner, and by express name mutually anathematized each other to the deep damnation of hell; and bishops have contradicted bishops, denounced each other as schismatics and heretics, and torn and devoured each other more like wild beasts than Christian men. If God had left the way of salvation to be transmitted to posterity by such means, there could have been no certainty for the learned, and no safety for the unlearned. But instead of this his Holy Spirit poured Divine light into the minds of prophets, apostles, and evangelists; the Holy Spirit inspired them to commit that Divine knowledge to

writing, and guarded them infallibly against error in the writing; and thus the way of salvation is sure and certain, made known to us in the inspired and infallible Word of God.

And there is another consideration to which we shall now refer that has a tendency to convince us of the sufficiency of the Bible: it is the consideration that we fall far short of the requirements of Holy Scripture. We are sure that it will be felt by every reader that we do not live to this written standard, and that therefore we need not look for another and unwritten one beyond it. We do not live up to what we have; therefore, we need not look for another which we have not: and instead of looking for some unwritten and traditionary standard beyond that which we have, let us rather labour to live according to that which we have. We are desired in the Scriptures to walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham and all the patriarchs, to imitate the example of the patience of the prophets, to exhibit the zeal of the apostles, and above all to remember that Jesus hath suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. And until we are able to live in the faith of the patriarchs, to walk in the patience of the prophets, to manifest the fervour of the apostles, and to imitate the benevolence of Jesus: until then we shall not have attained to the fulness of the standard contained in the Scriptures. And this is more than we have attained; more than the redeemed who circle around the throne in heaven, had attained in the days of their pilgrimage; so at least it is enough for our salvation, without adding other and additional requirements. And therefore before we look for another and an additional standard: before we look for the requirements of tradition, let us live according to the requirements of Scripture.

And if this be true in reference to practical duties; if it be true in reference to the sobriety, blamelessness, the righteousness, the benevolence, and the holiness of our lives; if it be true that all necessary practice for a Christian is contained and enforced in Scripture, it is equally true in reference to the divine principles, doctrines, and articles of faith which are necessary to salvation. As there is no duty that is important for us to practice that is not made known, so likewise there is no doctrine that is important for us to believe that is not revealed. And even our Romish opponents who would have us believe transubstantiation, masses, monkery, supererogation, and all the mummery of priestcraft, always endeavour to prove them by some portion or other of Scripture, and endeavour to persuade us that they are contained in the Word of God: they thus practically confess, however much it may be opposed to their theory, that the Scriptures are sufficient, or that they contain all that is necessary to salvation.

Let us remember, then, that the Bible is the only authoritative standard of religious belief and practice. It is to this touchstone that we are to bring all creeds and opinions; and what is in accordance with it, that, and that alone we are to receive, and whatever is opposed to it, let it come from what quarter it may, and let it be ever so cleverly and skilfully defended; it must be rejected, and rejected too, because it is contrary to the Scriptures. —"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

> "This the Judge that ends the strife,
> Where wit and reason fail;
> My guide to everlasting life,
> Through all this gloomy vale."

And Oh! that the Bible may be the rule of our lives as well

as the standard of our beliefs? Great stress is laid in the Scriptures on the practical exhibition of Divine truth in our conversation in the world: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ: Thy word, says the Psalmist, is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

CHAPTER V.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE BIBLE IS SEEN, IN THAT IT GIVES US LIGHT RESPECTING OUR FUTURE STATE.

THE subject on which we are now entering is one of great and permanent interest to us : for we all know that our continuance in this world is but short ; after a few brief years at the furthest death will come and hurry us to the tomb ; or he may come to us even in a much shorter period than that ; "for in such an hour as ye think not the son of man cometh :" "For what is your life ? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after death the judgment." It is then a question of grave and vital importance to us, whence can we obtain light on that awful future to which we are hastening ? Does not nature enlighten us upon it ? No : on this topic it is as silent as the grave : sun, moon, stars ; rocks, hills, mountains ; rivers, seas, and oceans afford us not one spark of intelligence or one ray of light upon it ; after all your inquiries into nature the darkness is as profound and the uncertainty as great as before. But though nature fail to satisfy us, cannot we get the needed information from the works of the sages of antiquity, from the writings of Socrates, Seneca and Plato ? No ? the doctrine of a future state is but obscurely hinted at in their writings, showing that their conceptions of it were but dim and shadowy in the extreme ; they indeed light us to the sepulchre but there they

leave us, and it is in vain we look to them for light, beyond the confines and narrow bounds of this present world, which passeth away. How consolatory for us then to know that the Lord has broken the silence and dispelled all gloom and uncertainty by telling us in His Word that, "Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

The doctrine of the immortality of the human soul is taught with clearness and distinctness in the Scriptures. Man as to his body is mortal; for no sooner do we begin to live than we also begin to die: "Thou turnest man to destruction and sayest, return ye children of men." And the works of man, like himself, are perishable: stately mansions and princely palaces; and gorgeous and magnificent temples and paintings, sculptures, and proud mausoleums, all partake of the general frailty and decay. Of all the splendid monuments of ancient art, most of it has crumbled away under the wasting influence of time, or it has been laid in ruins by the hands of violence. Where is now the much vaunted Temple at Jerusalem? Jerusalem fell under the conquering arms of Titus, and the holy place was laid in ruins: the ploughshare has passed over its foundations, and almost every fragment of its former magnificence has perished. And nature herself is perishable: for "the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up."

"The sun is but a spark of fire,
A transient meteor in the sky;
The soul, immortal as its sire,
Shall never die."

The soul is in its very nature immortal ; for it is immaterial and not subject to the laws of matter : it is quite a different substance from the body, and though its separation from it may make a change in the mode of its existence, yet it can make none in the existence itself. There is no power in the universe capable of annihilating the soul but that of the Creator ; and it is morally certain that he will never use his power for this purpose, for he has given us desires, hopes, and fears which stretch into eternity, and by giving us these he would only be mocking us were it not his divine *will* that the soul should be immortal. All the teachings of the Bible have a bearing on our immortality ; we are everywhere addressed as destined for a future and an endless state of existence, and not merely as inhabitants of this sublunary and mortal scene. Hence the care of the soul is made the first, the chief concern : "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." And he who pursues the world to the neglect of his soul is pursuing a shadow whilst he turns away from the substance : and the phantom will soon disappear, and the soul will be lost in endless and irretrievable misery : "For what says the Saviour, is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?"

And the Bible teaches not only the immortality of the soul but also the resurrection of the body. This is purely a doctrine of Revelation, for human wisdom, unaided from on high, would never have been able to discover it ; but in the Scriptures

it is taught with the greatest authority and clearness, so that no one who believes in the divinity of the Bible can reject it. It is in vain to urge against this doctrine the difficulties which lie in the way of it, for with omnipotence nothing is impossible: He who made man out of the dust of the ground at the first, can also bring that body up from the grave at the last day. "Jesus answered and said unto them: Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God," Here is assigned by our Saviour a cause at once adequate to produce the astonishing effect of the general Resurrection. And it is also reasonable for us to suppose that the body which had been the companion of the soul in its probationary state, should likewise be its companion in a future state: that it should share its everlasting joy or sorrows as it had previously shared in those acts of piety or of unbelief or sin which led to them. The body of the believer which has joined with the soul in the worship of God here below will join also in that nobler and more perfect worship of the Church before the throne, for we are told that Christ "will change our vile body and fashion it like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue even all things unto himself"—and the body of the unbeliever which has been the companion of the soul in sinning against God will also be its companion in suffering the vengeance of eternal fire: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

And the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is indeed

placed beyond all doubt or uncertainty by the resurrection of Christ. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive:" and the Apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. He burst asunder the bands of death, and threw the gates of the great prison-house of the grave wide open when, on the morning of the third day he rose in spite of the stone, the seal, and the watch: and thus were fulfilled the words of Hosea: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death: O death I will be thy plagues; O grave I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." The Christian can look into the sepulchre without fear, for the Saviour has despoiled death of its sting and the grave of its victory—it is for a short period only that his dust will remain in the grave, for it is consigned to it in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life. But the doctrine of the resurrection is to the unbeliever full of terror, for he too must rise; and alas! it will not be as in the case of the Christian, to eternal life, but to shame and everlasting contempt. Oh, sinner! will you, with the open grave before you, continue to despise that Saviour who stands with open arms ready to save you? Remember that as you die: as is your character when death overtakes you, so it will be to all eternity. And what an awful thought is that of rising from the grave to eternal destruction: to hear the solemn sentence pronounced on you, by God the judge of all, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

And closely connected with the foregoing truths is the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. In this life the wicked are often exalted and prosperous, and the godly and the

righteous are oftentimes depressed, and despised, and neglected ; and under the government of an all-wise, and gracious, and merciful and just God, this would be wholly inexplicable and insupportable were it not for the hope of a future state, where all the inequalities of the present state will be set right. This is a probationary state ; it is the seedtime for eternity ; and our actions in this life bear the same relations to a future state which the seed-time in the natural world bears to the harvest. "Be not deceived ; God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap : for he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Future rewards and punishments will consequently be distributed according to men's character, and not according to their circumstances ; and their being so dispensed is an irrefragable proof of the divine justice and equity ; for character is always of our own forming, whilst outward circumstances are often above our control : for there are many who cannot help their being poor, and poverty is no disgrace to any man, if he be honest and industrious, and many a vain and unprincipled and worthless character has inherited a princely fortune from his ancestors, and has wasted his time and treasure in drunkenness and in roiting, instead of devoting them to the good of men and to the glory of God. But in the eyes of the Eternal, all mere outward distinctions, such as arise from rank, education, and wealth, vanish away, and the only distinction which he recognises is moral distinction, that which arises from our characters, for there is no respect of persons with God, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, accor-

ding to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Hence the great, the vast importance attached to the right improvement of this present life; it is given us mainly to prepare for eternity; and even now that character is being formed on which our condition in eternity will be made to depend!

And it becomes us to remember that future rewards and punishments are *eternal*. As it regards the happiness of the righteous in the world to come, all the representations of the Word of God concur in setting it forth as being eternal. "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and, likewise we are said to be born again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorrupitble and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." And eternity being stamped upon all the joys of heaven, must greatly enhance their value in our estimation, and ought to stimulate us with earnestness and diligence to seek after them. Were it indeed possible for the happiness of the redeemed to know a period, even if the prospect of it were ever so far distant, that would instantly cast a deep gloom over their now jubilant spirits, and at once damp the ardour and fire of their devotion, and cause them to hang their harps upon the willows; but their happiness being eternal, their songs and praises will be eternal too, and their raptures will know no bounds but those of eternity. And the very prospect and anticipation of it is sufficient to cheer and revive the drooping

spirits of believers whilst sojourning in this vale of tears, and it reconciles, yea, more than reconciles, them to all the sorrows and difficulties of the way, esteeming themselves happy in the very midst of trials if they may at last reach the blissful shores, and join in the song of Moses and the Lamb :—

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.

Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled,
Then I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world.

Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all!

There shall I bathe my weary soul,
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast."

And as the happiness of the righteous in heaven is eternal, so too must the punishment of the lost in hell be eternal. The same word which is used to denote the eternity of the happiness of heaven is likewise used to denote the eternity of the punishment of hell: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal;" "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." And besides this, it is evident that the *character* of the lost remains unchanged; the flames of eternal perdition have no efficacy—no virtue in them to purge

away the deep stains of human transgression ; nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ his Son can do this ; and this the sinner continues to despise in spite of every warning and admonition, and consequently he has no just ground to complain of his punishment, seeing he despised the only remedy and the only way of escape. And its being eternal greatly aggravates and enhances the sufferings of lost spirits in hell. Oh, could they know for a truth that their agonies would have an end, even though it were delayed for ages yet to come, what an inconceivable pleasure the very anticipation of it would afford them ; but *eternal, for ever and for ever*, it is this which gives to their sufferings its keenest sting and covers their spirits with thick and impenetrable gloom. Oh ! who can conceive the anguish and the misery of being for ever shut out from heaven, from the presence of God, and from the face of Jesus Christ, and from the society of angels and glorified spirits ; and to be for ever shut up in hell with the devil and his angels, and guilty and lost spirits, with tyrants, murderers, thieves, fornicators, and liars of all times and countries ; how dreadful, how insupportable the thought ! Oh, then, sinner, be wise betimes, and flee from the wrath to come, for " behold now is the accepted time ; behold now is the day of salvation."

The doctrine of a future state is far, very far from being free from obscurity, for there are many questions which might be asked respecting our future existence, which we cannot satisfactorily solve, and that because they are not revealed to us in the Scriptures. And this obscurity is necessary to try our faith, to exercise our patience, and to perfect our characters ; hence we have to walk by faith, and not by sight. But there is enough revealed in the Scriptures, though not to satisfy vain cruiosity,

yet enough for the guidance, instruction, comfort and salvation of all who believe in Jesus.

"How precious is the book divine,
By inspiration given!
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,
To guide our souls to heaven.

It sweetly cheers our drooping hearts
In this dark vale of tears;
Life, light, and joy it still imparts,
And quells our rising fears.

This lamp, through all the tedious night
Of life shall guide our way;
Till we behold the clearer light
Of an eternal day."

CHAPTER VI.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE BIBLE IS SEEN IN THE GLORIOUS TRIUMPHS WHICH AWAIT IT.

"Father, is not thy promise pledged
To thine exalted Son,
That through the nations of the earth
Thy word of life shall run?

Ask, and I'll give the heathen lands
For thine inheritance;
And to the world's remotest shores,
Thine empire shall advance.

Hast Thou not said, the blinded Jews
Shall their Redeemer own?
While Gentiles to his standard crowd,
And bow before his throne?

Are not all kingdoms, tribes, and tongues
Under the expanse of heaven,
To the dominion of thy Son
Without exception given?

From east to west, from north to south,
Then be his name adored;
Europe, with all thy millions, shout
Hosannas to the Lord!

Asia and Africa resound
From shore to shore his fame;
And thou, America, in songs,
Redeeming love proclaim!"—GIBBONS.

THERE is much, very much in the world to retard the progress

of the Bible, for it has to grapple with deep-rooted and hoary-headed superstitions, and idolatries, and varied and multifarious forms of false religions. But it is consolatory to know that amid all the evils which impede its progress, it is steadily advancing, and that it will ultimately fill the whole earth. Had it not been the Word of God, such a triumph would have been utterly impossible, and it might safely be regarded as the dream of fanaticism and superstition ; but seeing that it is the Word of Eternal Truth, there is no room to doubt for a moment as to the issue : for though the conflict be long and arduous, victory is sure to come at last, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. "Refrain from these men, and let them alone," was the sage advice which Gamaliel gave to the Jewish council, "for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it ; lest haply ye be found to fight even against God." It is evident, that if the Bible had been of man,—if it had been a cunningly devised fable, it must long ago have perished, for the greatest opposition has everywhere been made against it, and so long as human nature remains what it is,—so long as it remains unchanged by divine grace, we are sure that opposition will always be made to it. For the Bible has exclusive claims ; it admits of no compromise and no partnership ; as a whole it must be received, or as a whole rejected. It strikes at the very root of polytheism and idolatry ; for Christianity is not to be regarded as one amongst a number of other religions, which are all of them equally authoritative and good, but as the only true religion, and all others are gross impostures and falsehoods :—Jesus Christ is not to be regarded as one amongst a number of other deities, all of whom have a

claim to our homage and worship, but as the only wise God our Saviour, and all others who are called gods are no gods. "I, even I, am the Lord and beside me there is no Saviour; Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else." And as it admits of no compromise with idolatry, so likewise it admits of no compromise with the world and with sin: for it declares, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." And such being its teachings, and its claims and requirements, it is no wonder that it has everywhere met with the most strenuous and virulent opposition; that, to use the language of the royal Psalmist, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." Men indeed will have a religion of some sort or another, they have always craved for it; but the religion they desire is a time-serving religion, and one that will allow them the indulgence of licentiousness and sin, and not the pure—the holy, and uncompromising religion of the Bible. Ah! this is much too pure and too heavenly for the unrenewed heart of man ever to love it; "for everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." The love of sin has, in every age, been a fruitful source of enmity against divine truth, and this enmity has by turns manifested itself in argument, sophistry, invective and foul abuse, and also in rank and deadly persecution. By such means as these have the adversaries of the Bible sought to arrest its progress; but

their efforts have from time to time been frustrated, for it contains within it the very elements of indestructibility, and progress, and the fury of Satan and his emissaries must spend itself against it in vain.

> "The powers of earth and hell, in vain
> Against the Sacred Word combine;
> Thy providence through every age,
> Securely guards the Book Divine."

Persecution, instead of hindering, has had the effect in the long run of furthering the progress of Divine truth; the blood of the martyrs has proved the seed of the church, and from the ashes of the sainted and persecuted dead have sprung up others who were valiant witnesses for the truth upon the earth. Nero, Dominitian, and Caligula, who persecuted the early Christians with such relentless fury, have all died, and their very memory is covered with eternal infamy and shame, but the truth which they sought to arrest still lives to bless, enlighten, and regenerate the world, and no power in earth or hell can ever destroy it, for "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me saith the Lord."

Great and signal is the success which has crowned the effort made in modern times to disseminate the Scriptures; the inhabitants of the celestial empire have been blest with them; and in India, as order is being regained, the missionaries are returning to their wonted labours of sowing the seed of the kingdom, and that with the encouraging prospect of its bearing fruit a hundred fold; and Africa, long neglected and down-

trodden, Africa, has in it the heralds of salvation, who not only proclaim but also distribute the Word of Truth to the natives, so that Ethiopia even now begins to stretch out her hands unto God; and the icy North is not altogether unvisited and unblest, and in spite of the decretials and bulls of Popes, the Scriptures have silently found their way into the papal dominions, and are sowing there the seeds of true liberty, even that liberty where-with Christ hath made us free: "The Lord gave the Word, great was the company of them that published it." "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Missions have not proved a failure, and if all have not been achieved that sanguine minds had expected, yet enough has been done to awaken gratitude for the past, and encourage hope for the future. The full amount of good which has been accomplished will never indeed be known in this world, but the day will declare it; and we know who hath said, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy: He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him;" and the thousands who have been gathered into the fold of the Redeemer from the commencement of the missionary enterprise is more than enough to recompense the Christian Church for all the amount of treasure and labour expended upon it, for *one* soul is of more value than the whole world. But the success already achieved is like unto the little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand witnessed by the prophet's servant on Carmel, which was the forerunner of a heavy rain; they are earnests of yet greater things to come; for the word of prophecy points to the universal and infallible spread of divine knowledge amongst all the nations of the earth; "and it shall come to pass in the

last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it; and many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem;" and again, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." These and all other kindred predictions of God's Word must be fulfilled, for they are the words of Him that cannot lie. The Bible will be translated into all the languages and dialects of the wide earth, and the vedas and shasters of the Hindoos, the writings of Confucius, the Koran of the false prophet of Mecca, and the book of the Mormons, which have deceived and deluded the nations, will be scattered to the four winds of heaven, and no place will be found for them, and the Lamb once slain will become known, loved and worshipped by all tribes and nations under heaven.

The various similitudes which are employed in Holy Writ to set forth the extension of the kingdom of Christ infallibly conduct us to such a conclusion. The prophet Ezekiel speaks of it under the similitude of the holy waters which flowed from under the threshold of the temple. Nearly all great rivers are small and insignificant in their origin, but gradually increase in their progress towards the ocean as they receive accession after accession of tributary streams, rivulets, and rivers; so that at length they become majestic and noble rivers, useful for the purposes of trade and commerce; as may be seen by tracing the course of

some of our own rivers, as for instance the Severn, which takes its rise from Plinlimmon, a mountain of Wales, and after flowing through Montgomeryshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire empties itself into the Bristol Channel: and the waters which Ezekiel saw at first were but small, for they were only up to the ankles; but small as they were at their origin, they continued to increase till at length they became waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over;—and thus too does the river of the water of life constantly increase, enriching and fertilizing every portion of the globe through which it flows, and ere long it will overflow the whole earth. Daniel speaks of it under the similitude of a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and it smote the image whose head was of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay; "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Here we have delineated not only the humble origin of the Gospel and its independence of all earthly power, in that it is a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, but chiefly and principally its certain and astonishing progress; for it became a great mountain and filled the whole earth: the Chaldean, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman powers, which were signified by the image which the stone smote and cut to pieces, have all of them long ago disappeared from the face of the earth, but the kingdom of Immanuel, in spite of all lets and hindrances, is daily augmenting

and extending its influence, and soon the kingdoms of this world will have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. And our Saviour represents his kingdom as a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs; and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air lodge under the branches thereof: and the Gospel is indeed already become a great tree, casting forth its branches to the four quarters of the globe, and the nations thereof will come, ere long, and sit under the shadow of it with great delight. And again our Saviour compares it unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened; and the leaven of Divine truth is already silently, and perhaps at times almost imperceptibly, but yet surely working itself into the laws, literature, commerce, and manners, and usages of the earth, so as entirely to change their character, and transform them into its own holy, benevolent, and divine likeness; and it will yet make itself more widely and extensively felt and cast out entirely from amongst the nations of the earth the old leaven of unrighteousness, sin, superstition, and error.

"This little seed from heaven
Shall soon become a tree;
This ever blessed leaven,
Diffused abroad must be—
Till God the Son shall come again,
It must go on. Amen! Amen!"

And this glorious and blissful consummation, let us remember is necessary to constitute the mediatorial reward promised to the Saviour as the fruit of his sufferings unto death. "When thou

shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." "Who for the joy that was set before him," says the apostle Paul, "endured the cross despising the shame." In dying on the cross, the holy Saviour looked forward beyond the anguish of his crucifixion to the glorious results of it as witnessed in the conversion, salvation, and glorification of an innumerable multitude of the human race, of all nations, and kindred, and people and tongues; and the sight of their happiness as the fruit of his pain carried him unhesitatingly forward through his fearful fight of afflictions. And we are sure that it is not a little that can satisfy him for all his pains and sorrows; he shall have a numerous seed; his children will exceed in number as well as in brightness and glory the stars which bespangle the firmament of heaven; they will be more numerous even than the drops of early dew which descend on the pastures of the wilderness, and than the sand on the sea shore, which is innumerable. "Thy people shall be made willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth." The nations have indeed, long ago, by covenant been given to the Son, and it needs but the prayers, the contributions, and the zealous and evangelistic labours of the church for them actually to be given to him. The aspects of the times which are passing over us loudly call upon us to awake from our supineness and lethargy, and gird up ourselves for the conflict, and to come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty: and never probably was there a period more than the present in the history of our world, when it could

with greater appropriateness and truth be said, "The fields are white already to harvest; the harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." Ah! were we to give ourselves to prayer, and were we to remember our individual responsibility and feel constantly our obligations to the Great Redeemer, to him who died and rose again, we are sure that men possessed of fervent and apostolic zeal, and fitted by their physical and mental constitutions for the arduous but honourable work of preaching among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, would on every hand present themselves and say, here are we, send us; and they would go forth in the name of the Lord, and endued with power from on high, and great would be the success reaped by them. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

"One song employs all nations, and all cry,
Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us.
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other; and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
Till nation after nation, taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round."

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUDING REMARKS, URGING TO THE HABITUAL AND PRAYERFUL STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

THE Bible is not now as was the case before the Reformation in the sixteenth century—locked up in the dead languages, and withheld from the populace by an arrogant but an ignorant priesthood : it is translated into the language of the people, offered for a mere nominal price (for, for tenpence an entire copy of it can be purchased) and it is widely circulated, and to be met with not only on the shelves of the literati and in the drawing-rooms of the rich, but also in the humble dwellings of our agricultural labourers and artisans of our crowded towns and cities. What friend of the Bible but must rejoice at this ! But it is however one thing to have the Bible in our possession, but another devoutly to read and study it ; it is indeed a subject for devout gratitude and praise that it is so accessible, but that it is in so many instances forgotten and neglected ought to lead to close searchings of heart, and occasion deep humiliation and shame. Remember, it is not having the Bible in our houses, on our shelves, or on our tables, that can do us good, but reading, studying, and believing it ! and to encourage the devout or prayerful study of it is the aim of this concluding chapter.

In pressing upon your consideration the importance of the study of the Bible, we feel it incumbent upon us at the outset to caution you against that kind of reading which would give you a disrelish for the Word of God. Let it not for a moment be supposed that we would have you confine your reading exclusively to the Bible and to works strictly religious and theological: for other works doubtless will come in your way, which you can consult both with safety and great advantage: but yet, whilst this is the case, as you value your immortal soul, it becomes you to avoid all writings, be they newspapers, periodicals, or works of fiction, that would in any way, or to any degree lower your regard for the Bible, or unfit you for the devout study of it. Ah, it is but a poor, a sorry exchange to cast away the Bible for the last novel: if indeed you can find time greedily to devour novels and thus neglect your Bible, you may rest assured that they are working your moral and spiritual ruin: if such works are recommended by the ease and elegance of their diction and their bewitching and enchanting imagery, the danger is all the more imminent, and it becomes the watchmen on the walls of Zion to sound the alarm and guard the young and the unwary against them: for hundreds upon hundreds, yea thousands upon thousands have been ruined by them. Oh! let parents and the guardians of our youths, instil into their young and tender minds a love for the Bible, that they may become like unto Timothy, of whom it is said, "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Bunyan, when he wrote the Pilgrim's Progress had no other works with him than the Bible, and Fox's book of Martyrs; and even

Shakespere and Milton are greatly indebted to it; and is not the difference between Pagan and English literature mainly attributable to the influence which the Bible has exerted on the latter! To quote the language of an anonymous writer, "Not to say that antiquity furnishes no example of a philosopher, who could think like Newton; or a moralist who could illustrate human obligation like Edwards or Johnson: we find a proof of the superiority of Christian principles even in those works of imagination which are deemed scarcely susceptible of influence from religion. The common romance and the novel, with all their fooleries and ravings, would be more contemptible than they are, did they not sometimes undesignedly catch a conception or adorn a character from the rich treasury of revelation. And the more splendid fictions of the poet derive their highest charm from the evangelical philanthrophy, tenderness, and sublimity that invest them. But for the Bible, Homer and Milton might have stood upon the same shelf, equals in morality as they are competitors for renown. Young had ranked with Juvenal, and Cowper had united with Horace and with Ovid to swell the tide of voluptuousness." Whilst then you have liberty to walk abroad into the wide field of literature, and taste whatever is pure and wholesome, it yet becomes you to be careful that you do not neglect that greatest, best, and holiest of all books, the Bible! Come to it in a candid and prayerful spirit, and then, we are certain, that a rich blessing will attend your perusal of it!

The prayerful study of the Bible is necessary in order rightly to understand the meaning of it. "Open thou mine eyes," was the prayer of the Psalmist, "that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." No one can become mighty in the Scriptures

without prayer; human learning and critical acumen are almost sure to lead their possessor astray unless sanctified by prayer, but with it they are of immense advantage in searching after truth. If we would know the meaning of God's Word, we must, by close communion with Him in prayer, seek the illumination of his Holy Spirit, for it is his province to lead us into all truth and without his guidance we are sure to go astray; but enlightened and taught from above, the Bible will not prove a dry or an uninteresting study, but fresh beauties will ever be discovered in it, and the intellect will be strengthened and invigorated, and the heart and the life renewed and sanctified thereby. Other studies will be deemed trifles when compared with it, for the lustre of the sciences is eclipsed by the greater glory and brightness of the science of Divine truth; "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."

Again, the prayerful study of the Bible will make us enlightened Christians, and render us proof against the assaults of error. Christianity can only be learnt from the Scriptures; and it is a reproach and an indelible stigma upon any one bearing its sacred name to be ignorant of the only depository of Divine truth. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." We should not be satisfied with reading other works, even though they are religious books, and neglect it, for no other can ever supply its place. And he who devoutly, and habitually studies the Bible will take nothing upon trust, and will not be carried away

by the glitter of great names, but will bring the opinions of the Fathers and learned divines to the test of Scripture, and this will furnish him with an effective antidote against the cavils of infidelity and all the errors of the times, for he will thus be able easily to discern the precious from the vile, and the true from the false—both in doctrine and in practice. Ah! who are the parties who are most in danger of being carried away by the fooleries of Popery and Puseyism, or the various other forms of error which infest the land? Are they our Sunday-school teachers and scholars, and our Bible readers? Oh, no! they are rather those who receive their creed at secondhand, who are willing that others should think for them in matters of religion, and whose faith stands not in the power of God, as did that of the Corinthians of old, but in the wisdom of men; these are the parties who everywhere most easily fall a prey to superstition and error: but the study, the prayerful study of the Bible will always be found to present a strong barrier against the encroachments of error. "That we, henceforth, be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Further, the prayerful study of the Bible leads to activity and devotedness in the cause of Christ. It is a sickly kind of meditation which does not lead to effort, and which would lead an individual to shut himself up in cloisters lest he should be contaminated by coming in contact with the world. The way to manifest our religion is not by an ignoble retirement from the discharge of the active duties of life, but by living above the world and by earnest and believing efforts to reclaim it from

error and sin. The Scriptures everywhere exhort to diligence in the service of Christ. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." "But it is good to be zealously effected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you; and let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." And not only do they exhort us to this, but they also point us to the example of the blessed Redeemer, who when on earth, went about doing good. His was an intensely busy life; his days were spent in travelling from village to village, and from town to town, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and diseases amongst the people; and his nights, after all the labours and fatigue of the day, were often spent, not in seeking bodily rest but in prayer.

> "Cold mountains and the midnight air
> Witnessed the fervour of thy prayer;
> The desert thy temptations knew,
> Thy conflict and thy victory too."

And the apostles had also imbibed the spirit of their Divine Lord and master, as may be learnt from the language of the great apostle of the Gentiles,—"Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings: by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned; by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left,

by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." This is the zeal, devotedness, and disinterestedness we are to emulate, and what so likely to stimulate thereto as the prayerful study of the Bible? It is impossible, utterly impossible for us thus to study it and remain indifferent to Christian effort.

The prayerful study of the Bible is sure to lead to increased Christian liberality. That we have arrived at anything like perfection in this important department of Christian service is held only by a very few; true there are not wanting among us instances of Christians giving cheerfully and munificently of their worldly substance to the Lord: but the scanty rule of giving, hitherto adhered to by the great majority of the professed followers of the Saviour convinces us, that they have not as yet deeply pondered the saying of their Lord—"*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

It is well to have the eloquent orator from the platform to plead the cause of our missionary and Bible societies, but we must not expect too much from this,—and there is need that Christians learn to depend less on the excitement of a public meeting to move them to liberality, and that they give more from principle; and were they habitually to study their Bibles, this would be the case. The rule of giving would no longer be what they had been in the habit of doing in former years, or what others are doing, but as the Lord had prospered them; and this, after all, would be felt to be but a poor return for what

the Saviour has done for us. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

And the prayerful study of the Bible would likewise promote our spirituality and growth in grace. "For to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace: but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And to grow in grace it is necessary that we grow in the *knowledge* of the Saviour; and the greater and more enlarged our acquaintance with Divine truth, the stronger is the incentive which we have to live a holy and blameless life, and to abound in every good word and work. Oh, then, let us give ourselves more to the study of the Bible; let us study it with a view to derive from it those lessons of heavenly wisdom and grace which it is designed and so well adapted to afford. The Bible is too much neglected, and that not only by the world, but also by the Church; for the pressure of business, along with other causes, have led to a criminal disregard of the Scriptures. A Psalm or two, or a few verses out of one of the Gospels or the Epistles in the course of the day, or it may be of the week, and those hurriedly gone through, is all which in numerous cases is attempted to be done, and the study of the Scriptures is regarded as belonging exclusively to ministers and to candidates for the sacred office! but the truth is, that the prayerful study of them, which it has been the aim of this chapter to enforce, is incumbent upon *all* Christians, be they ministers, office-bearers, or more private members. Many have said "we have no time to study the Bible:" to such we say, then you ought to have time; you have no right to engage in such a multiplicity of worldly business as

to deprive you of a little leisure for the reading of God's Holy Word; and take care, lest whilst you are joining house to house, and adding field to field, and adorning and enlarging your premises, and pushing and extending your business,—take care lest God send leanness into your soul for your neglect of his Word. No time! why you can find time occasionally for the evening party; you can find time to avail yourself of steamboat and railway excursions; you can find time to read the papers and, perhaps, also Dickens, and Bulwer's works,—and can't you then find time for reading the Bible? Oh! did you but love it more, then we are sure you would find time to read it! And, after all, daily reading and prayer need not in the least trench upon the lawful duties of your calling. General Havelock, amid the din and confusion of war, so husbanded his time as to have two hours every morning for reading and prayer: and it is the language of an inspired apostle, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit: serving the Lord." Robert Hall, speaking of the esteem in which the Scriptures are held, says, "The votaries of all other religions regard their supposed sacred books, with a devotion which consecrates their errors, and makes their very absurdities venerable in their eyes. They glory in that which is their shame: we are ashamed of that which is our glory. Indifference and inattention to the truths and mysteries of revelation, have led by an easy transition, to a dislike and neglect of the book which contains them; so that in a Christian country nothing is thought so vulgar as a serious appeal to the Scriptures; and the candidate for fashionable distinction would rather betray a familiar acquaintance with the most impure writers, than with the words of Christ and his

apostles." Christians! let not your Bibles be despised, neglected, or forgotten, for a blessing is pronounced on him that delights in the Law of the Lord, and meditates therein day and night; and it is said, "Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them." Say you then, "The Law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." Oh, "how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." The Scriptures bring to our view the reward in heaven, for the sake of which Moses renounced the splendours and the fascinations of an Egyptian court; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. One reason why heavenly realities affect us so little is, that the mind is not allowed to dwell sufficiently long upon them, and is too much occupied with the consideration of other and inferior objects. Let us then rise in our thoughts and contemplations above this sublunary and transitory scene; let us soar heavenwards, where unsullied purity and endless pleasures dwell; then the earth would grow daily less and less in our esteem, and it would be a mystery to us that it had been allowed to occupy our thoughts and enchant our hearts so long. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

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